

Project Update: March 2009

Objectives:

1. Increase the capacity of schools and local communities to organise and become involved in decision making processes for local development and better environmental care.

- Revise and adapt the W.A.T.E.R. program materials developed in Bhutan, to reflect the situation in Nepal. (Besides adaptation of W.A.T.E.R., additional questionnaires and worksheets on five themes and visual materials have been given to the schools. More information leaflets are being planned as project goes on.)
- Train teachers in methodology for survey and assessment of the local catchment using the existing subjects and topics in the school curriculum. (More meetings and training is required and is being undertaken. Teachers have identified subjects and topics that could be turned into activities to address local issues).
- Teachers integrate the methodology into classroom teaching of science, environment and social studies. (They are also integrating issues through science, social and environment studies).
- Schools share the findings from the initial survey and assessment with the local community. (This will be done through an exhibition-planned around July/August 2009).
- The survey and assessment will be repeated each year as part of the school curriculum. (The participating schools have committed to institutionalize an Eco Task force-as an outcome of this project for undertaking similar programs).

2. Improve the condition of the forest areas at the head of the catchment so they can both support higher biodiversity and meet the needs of local people through sustainable harvesting of forest products.

- Detailed forest research and survey by schools and local community into structure, biodiversity, changes over time, forest products, hydrology, water quality, existing management, traditional knowledge, cultural/religious restrictions, social and economic situation, and adjacent land-use. Survey methods include semi-structured interviews and participatory mapping. (The students are undertaking the research and will come to a conclusion by June 2009. Presently the research and compilation are being done continuously).
- Findings of research and survey shared with wider community and ideas generated for future management and income generating opportunities. (Findings of research and survey shared with wider community and ideas generated for future management and income generating opportunities.)

3. Training, resource development and expansion

- Train a team of teachers and CEEN staff to provide a training and information service to other schools. (The teachers from participating schools and CEEN members are fully aware of the issues being addressed through this project and can easily communicate and train other teachers from other schools. The CEEN has identified

five active teachers for future projects considering their performance in this project so far).

- Prepare an interpretation strategy for the Education Centre covering information on the alternative technologies being used at the school, a resource library on sustainability and education for sustainability, internet access and links to national and international NGOs. (Shuvatara school has already been supporting these schools in many ways. The information centre being initiated by local youth at Sisnery H School (centrally located and more accessible) needs to be strengthened. Dialogues are being exchanged on how CEEN could link this centre with relevant organizations/institutions).

As this is the first time that the participating schools have taken this kind of work, it was difficult in the beginning to make the teachers understand the benefits of this method of imparting knowledge. However, with continuous touch (individually and groups), and orientation on water test-kits, they have opened up themselves for new ideas of teaching/learning and importance of community study through subject-linkages.

The three most important outcomes from this project so far are as follows:

1. The teachers have finally understood the value of research-based teaching, which has made easier to undertake similar projects in future through the initiation of Eco Task force within their schools. They have learnt to do curriculum mapping, develop activities from the textbooks and make the lessons more interesting and livelier for the children. The teachers have become more knowledgeable about their community and the links with the textbooks. They have taken the children to see the actual problems in the field rather than informing them as written in the textbooks.
2. The children have shown high interest level while undertaking research work, have learnt the facts of life, which is bound to change their attitude towards environment. They are also learning to interact with people from all walks of life during the course of interviews/fieldwork/presentation/sharing. They have learnt to face the crowd and explain their findings more confidently.
3. The community members have gained indigenous knowledge on local herbs and showed commitment and interest to conserve and promote them more seriously and vigorously. They are convinced about the harmful impacts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and have shown interest to go back to nature and take better care of the environment around.

With the workshop, the community members and local youths have shown interest to start an information centre, where CEEN will be able to play more roles to educate more people through library development, short talk programs and bringing in guest speakers and linking the centre with relevant national and international institutions and organisations. The herbarium which is being initiated through this project will bring in more community members to the site where they will learn more about the local herbs. Two members from the community will be shortly trained on Nature Cure by using local herbs by Dr. Hari

Pokherel. This will greatly help people to utilize the natural resources more wisely and carefully.

This project started in October 2008 and will end up in September 2009. Hence, this project is almost in the middle of its activities. Everything is moving ahead as planned. Hence, it will be continued with anticipated results.

All the findings will be compiled and will be blown up in big chart papers, with blown up photographs on various issues and activities, leaflets along with slogans, captions and relevant information, through an exhibition that will be organized in a strategic location, where street drama, poetry and songs on the project themes will be staged. Local community members, government officials, media and press will be invited to witness the findings of the children with their suggestions. It is hoped that this way wider mass of people will be sensitized towards sustainable development in their own communities.

The visits to the school will continue to be done to guide the teachers, students for undertaking fieldwork. This is very important as there may be few problems which the teachers and students may require help in, compiling the findings, preparation of exhibits, preparation of street drama, etc. Another important work is to start developing the herbal demonstration site near the Range Post and developing the signposts/information boards. In the meantime, teachers have just received training to handle the water test equipment and the kits are ordered after which water tests will be done at different points.

A workshop for youth, comprising of college going students, and school dropouts will be organized, tentatively by the third week of March, who will be motivated to work as social mobilisers even after the project is over. Two key persons in the community are identifying the youth for this participation, on the basis of their commitment to community development, social work, etc.

